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THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE AND THE FOREIGN POLICIES OF JAPAN

*By Frederick Moore, Foreign Counsellor to the Japanese
Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

It is only in an indirect way that I am able to comply with the request of the *Journal of International Relations* for an estimate of the success of the Washington Conference from a Japanese point of view, for while I am an official of the Japanese Foreign Office I cannot speak in that capacity. But, as an American who has had an opportunity to obtain the Japanese viewpoint, what I say may be of some interest.

I was much struck with a simple statement appearing in the *New York World* at the conclusion of the Conference. The *World* said:

The way to measure the importance of the Naval Treaty is to remember what would have happened had there been no agitation for disarmament, no Washington Conference, no Hughes proposal, and no agreement.

We should have gone ahead with a programme for the greatest navy in the world. Japan would have gone ahead with her programme to prevent us from building too far ahead of her. Great Britain would have had to increase her naval programme to prevent Japan and America from outdistancing her. Then about 1924 or so we should have had to make a new programme to keep Japan and Great Britain from catching up to us. And they would have had to have more programmes in order to catch up with us.

. . . . In order to make people pay the taxes, people in each country would have had to be kept in a state of palpitating excitement about the sinister plots, the hidden spies, and the tremendous ambitions of the other two nations.

The Japanese are as glad to be relieved of all this as we are. That is their foremost reason for regarding the Conference as an overwhelming success and for hoping that a new era has been established in the world.

It is a remarkable change that has suddenly taken place. Up to the memorable day of the opening of the Conference,

we Americans, many of us, seemed to be losing our perspective in the outlook towards the Orient. We did not seem to realize that the Great War left the United States absolutely secure from dangers of attack by any other Power. We heard talk of war with Japan, and some of us looked with suspicion on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, questioning Great Britain's commitments. In this respect the Conference was remarkably valuable: even if nothing more should have come out of it than the education it gave us in Far Eastern and Pacific matters, and the demonstration of our own comparative might, it would have achieved much.

The lesson came to us on the first day of the Conference, when President Harding stated that we harbored no fears and Mr. Hughes bore out this declaration with the significant proposal of a 5-5-3 naval limitation, based on existing navies. Suddenly and definitely we were pulled up and set right by a group of five practical men—the President and the four American delegates—who had studied the matter of sea-power and knew that, however several groups of men may have tried to mislead us, we as a nation are without actual or even potential danger on any side. To the north, to the south, to the east, or to the west there is not a single nation that can assault us with any chance of success. This unparalleled geographical position, coupled with our wealth of man-power, extent of territory, and natural resources, gave us that prestige which was necessary for the summoning of the Conference; and it was a practical lesson to us to see how other naval powers readily acceded to our proposals.

The World War left only three great navies upon the seas—one belonging to Europe, one to America, and one to Asia. At the conclusion of the war, the Japanese navy was a little over half the size of ours, but, 7000 miles away and supported by no such supply of resources as we possess, it was never designed to be a menace to us and could not be. The British navy was approximately double the size of ours; but that navy, with the exception of one brief period during our Civil War, had always been greater than ours and had

not endangered us for a hundred years. And for both moral and practical reasons it has been a cornerstone of British foreign policy for half a century to keep the peace with us at practically any price.

But in spite of this splendid situation we proceeded with our 1916 naval project after the conclusion of the war, and many enthusiastic spirits among us hailed the advantage we were taking to make evident our ability to outbuild the rest of the world. Our program provided for the completion of sixteen capital post-Jutland ships in 1924, which was a larger number than Great Britain and Japan together would complete. Each of these ships, to say nothing of the rest of the navy or its upkeep, was to cost, in initial construction, \$40,000,000 or more—sufficient money, the cost of one ship alone, to save all the child life of Europe that has suffered and died of cold and starvation this winter.

If such a project was to be carried to completion, it had to be justified in the eyes of the American people or they would not stand for it; and the effort was made by some men to explain it by developing distrust of the motives and intentions of Japan, and in a minor degree, of Great Britain. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, to which we had never before objected, became a thing of possible menace to us, although the Japanese government had understood for years that in case of conflict with the United States Great Britain would not participate on their side.

It may have been natural for a nation like ours, so remote in fact as well as in spirit from the affairs of Europe and of Asia, to go through a disturbed period for a year or two after such a ghastly catastrophe as the war that recently ended; but it was fortunate for us and for the world that this Conference came and cleared the air. For our lack of knowledge made us the prey to suspicion that was needless.

When the World War ended it left the nations of Europe, all of them, so heavily in debt and so thoroughly exhausted that by comparison this country of ours became a super-state. It is such now and will remain such for many years to come—in fact, as far as can be seen into the future. We are still progressing materially as no other nation is,

and we still have space and territory for millions upon millions of people. Our population per square mile is approximately 35 persons; while that of England is 370, and that of Japan is 396—which means eleven and twelve to our one.

Sometimes when I listen to fellow Americans talking about our international righteousness and generosity, I am reminded of Mr. Rockefeller and the munificent manner in which he gives away millions while the average citizen is careful in bestowing his hundreds upon charity. The United States can afford to be lavish as no other country in the world can. We can outbuild the other navies of the world at any time that we want to; we can and do distribute more charity than any other country. But our basic wage in the United States is three dollars a day, while that of England is about a half and that of Japan about a fifth. Nor is that all: In England a man with an income of \$4000 pays, I believe, \$1000 of it in income tax; and the Japanese are also very heavily taxed. Here in the United States a man with an income of \$4000 pays annually, if he is a single man, \$120, and less if he is married. We are generous with our money—no one can dispute that; but it seems to me we could afford more generosity of spirit and less inclination to criticize those countries which are eminent in doing the work of the world, even though they may not be at all times idealistic in their methods.

But let me draw your attention to the fact that Japan, as has been stated by the Japanese delegates, has cost China very few lives, while it cannot be disputed that once at least, in the war against Russia, she protected China from a most menacing aggression and that among her foremost objectives for many years has been provision for the security of China against any further encroachments from Occidental nations. That is also a first principle in her Siberian program today—anticipation of a possibly formidable return of Russia to the East. With assurance of protection given China, it is probable that no Japanese advocates of an aggressive policy on the part of their country will again be able to catch the ear of the Japanese people

and make them believe that unless they get hold of China first one or more of the western powers will.

Now, with regard to Great Britain, her foreign policy has been—more or less because of strikingly different conditions—very different from that of the United States. While in America one state lives, as it were, by trade with the others [our foreign trade being a source of additional profit and wealth to us] the British have been impelled to go out to foreign lands for colonization, for raw materials and for trade; and, in the course of their adventures, they have taken charge of many backward peoples. Nothing like this has been our policy—not for some decades, at any rate. With few exceptions [notably various Pacific and several West Indian islands] our policy has been one of letting other peoples work out their own salvation. For ourselves, I think this is a good policy; but, knowing something about the British and their colonies and fully realizing that their administrations are not perfect, I, nevertheless, am grateful for British administration—in Egypt, India, Turkey and elsewhere; and I say this not for the sake of British prestige,—about which I care nothing, the British having sufficient glory,—nor for the sake of British merchants; I say it in the interest of the millions of backward peoples to whom Great Britain has given protection (often from their own tyrants) and organization which has enabled hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, to live their lives who would otherwise have died of starvation and disease. To sympathize with the “under dog” is kindly; but to condone his faults and condemn his protectors is often stupid and sometimes dangerous.

For China, Great Britain has done a remarkable work. Without the British it is doubtful if China proper, to say nothing of her extensive Dependencies, the remaining territories of her ancient conquests, would be intact today. To say nothing of the assistance Great Britain gave to China in thwarting imperialistic Russian and German projects in the Orient, here are two present cases to consider: An Englishman, supported by his government, organized China's customs service; and today that service, still con-

trolled by an Englishman under treaty with the British government, is one of the two stabilizing factors that maintain China's credit in the world and which, at the same time, help materially to keep the country unified. The other factor is the salt gabelle, or bureau, also controlled by a British subject under arrangement with several consortium powers. These two sources of *r  venue* are the most important and most dependable that the central government possesses, because no other tax is administered with complete honesty and modern efficiency. If these two departments of the government were relieved of foreign supervision, it is safe to say that China's foreign bonds, guaranteed by them, would immediately and seriously decline, while her rival military factions would promptly take control of the sources of these revenues in their particular districts, with the result of further decentralization if not actual disunion.

In recent years attempts have been made not only to alarm us with regard to the Japanese, but also to entangle us in the Chinese situation, which is complex and remote and cannot be solved in a day. We shall have China's problem before us for as long as we who are here may live, and it will go on for many years thereafter. China is a country considerably larger than the United States in territory and several times our size in population. It is the oldest civilization that exists in the world today, and, being steeped in traditions, will be one of the slowest to change. If any one thought that the Conference in Washington could, by the drafting of declarations or treaties, remake that massive old state, he was very much mistaken. The Chinese, if they are to adopt our methods and our manners, must do so of their own accord and in their own good time. The remaking of peoples is not the work of a day nor of a group of men in conference. But a group of intelligent men in a conference, supported by the dominating bulk of advanced public opinion the world over, can accomplish much—and has done so at Washington.

At the present time, in spite of her gigantic size, China has only about 8000 miles of railway, most of it under

foreign control—British, French, Belgian, Japanese and American. You can get some idea of the difference that exists between China and the United States if you consider the fact that we have in the United States over 270,000 miles of road. Imagine this country with railways connecting only New Orleans, Boston, St. Louis and Chicago with the capital and the Atlantic coast and you will realize that calling China a republic does not make her exactly like the United States.

The Conference at Washington, as Senator Underwood said, has given China a Magna Charta. The nations have renewed their pledges to respect her sovereignty and it will be difficult for them to go behind their agreements even if any of them should want to do so. It is now for the Chinese to unify their country, create a condition of security for life and property within it, and establish their responsibility to others. When they have done that,—as the Japanese did with conspicuously fewer resources and advantages,—they will find equal facility in getting rid of the humiliation of extraterritoriality and the presence of foreign troops at their capital and elsewhere. These troops include Americans; and American gunboats, as well as those of other countries, ply the waters of the Yangtze River for the purpose of protecting business men and missionaries. When the Chinese unify China and establish law and order in their provinces, such foreign precautions will be needless. When these things are done China's industrious and thrifty population of 400,000,000 souls will make her the greatest single national power in the world.

For the immediate future we have the Washington pledges of the greater powers to respect the integrity and independence of China; and it will be difficult and most unwise for any power to go behind these pledges. On this score the final address of the Japanese Delegation at the Washington Conference expresses substantially the policy that Japan has decided to follow with regard to her great neighbor. In that closing address, Baron Shidehara said:

It has been found that we are all striving for the same goal of life, and that goal is now perceptibly within sight.

Take, for instance, the Chinese problem, which, it was often asserted, would one day lead to world-wide conflagration. What has the Conference revealed? No sooner had Mr. Root formulated and presented the four great rules of international conduct with regard to China than those proposals met a ready, spontaneous, and wholehearted approval on all sides. They laid the foundation of the work of the delegations and of friendly understandings among nations.

No one denies to China her sacred right to govern herself. No one stands in the way of China working out her own great national destiny. No one has come to the Conference with any plan of seeking anything at the expense of China. On the contrary, every participating nation has shown readiness at all times to help China out of her present difficulties.

Japan believes that she has made to China every possible concession compatible with a sense of reason, fairness, and honor. She does not regret it. She rejoices in the thought that the sacrifice which she has offered will not be in vain, in the greater cause of international friendship and good-will.

We are vitally interested in a speedy establishment of peace and unity in China and in the economic development of her vast natural resources. It is, indeed, to the Asiatic mainland that we must look primarily for raw materials and for the markets where our manufactured articles may be sold. Neither raw materials nor the markets can be had unless order, happiness and prosperity reign in China, under good and stable government. With hundreds of thousands of our nationals resident in China, with enormous amounts of our capital invested there, and with our own national existence largely dependent on that of our neighbor, we are naturally interested in that country to a greater extent than any of the countries remotely situated.

To say that Japan has special interests in China is simply to state a plain and actual fact. It intimates no claim or pretension of any kind prejudicial to China or to any other foreign nation.

Nor are we actuated by any intention of securing preferential or exclusive economic rights in China. Why should we need them? Why should we be afraid of foreign competition in the Chinese market provided it is conducted squarely and honestly? Favored by geographical position, and having fair knowledge of the actual requirements of the Chinese people, our traders and business men can well take care of themselves in their commercial, industrial, and financial activities in China without any preferential or exclusive rights.

We do not seek any territory in China, but we do seek a field of economic activity beneficial as much to China as to Japan, based always on the principle of the open door and equal opportunity.

The Japanese delegates and other officials during the course of the Conference made various statements which together indicated substantially the trend of Japanese

thought as well as the foreign policies which the government has adopted. For instance, on January 21, Count Uchida, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, said, with regard to the Anglo-Japanese alliance, that the new four power treaty

Is a sign of the progress of the times and a manifestation of the spirit of international friendship and good-will on an enlarged scale. It is a matter of profound gratification to the Japanese government that by virtue of the Treaty the general peace of the Pacific Ocean will be assured conjointly by the four Powers.

Prior to this, Baron Shidehara, Ambassador to Washington, had stated with regard to the Alliance that

Japan is naturally anxious to strengthen the ties of friendship and loyal coöperation between herself and the British Empire, which she regards as of the utmost importance to the stability of the Far East. At the same time, it is the firm and fixed determination of Japan to permit nothing to hamper her traditional relations of good-will and good understanding with the United States. She is satisfied that these two affiliations are in no way incompatible, but, on the contrary, complimentary and even essential to each other.

On January 23, Baron Shidehara reviewed before the Far Eastern Committee of the Washington Conference the history of Japan's military expedition to Siberia. He pointed out that this expedition was undertaken originally in common accord and cooperation with the United States and other allied powers in 1918, and declared that disorders and the unstable conditions of affairs in East Siberia had made it necessary, in the opinion of his Government, to maintain troops in the Vladivostok region and that the massacre of over seven hundred Japanese at Nikolaievsk in 1920 was reason for the occupation of certain points in the Russian province of Sakhalin, pending the establishment in Russia of a responsible authority with whom Japan could communicate in order to obtain due satisfaction. Baron Shidehara said in conclusion:

The Japanese delegation is authorized to declare that it is the fixed and settled policy of Japan to respect the territorial integrity of Russia, and to observe the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of that country, as well as the principle of

equal opportunity for the commerce and industry of all nations in every part of the Russian possessions.

With regard to the naval engagements and their significance, Admiral Kato said on January 14, speaking before the Japan Society in New York:

Critics may say that such declarations as we have been making at Washington were made a hundred years ago at Vienna, and subsequently at The Hague, and therefore will amount to nothing. But that is not the case, for very definite reasons. In the first place, the several nations represented in Washington have given, by the concessions they have made to the views of others, tangible demonstrations of the earnestness of their intentions. Unless the spirit that actuates the people of these nations were deep-rooted in sincere desire, these concessions would not have been possible. Fortunately, the interests and the desires of the greater nations of the world are in accord; otherwise, the scrapping of hundreds of thousands of tons of fighting ships would not be practicable or acceptable. That is unmistakable evidence of unmistakable agreement and logic.

I want particularly to draw your attention to one fact. An effort has been made for a number of years to present Japan to you as a military nation designing to dominate the Pacific. Some of us Japanese have tried to disabuse the minds of those who were wont to believe this calumny, but with many the charge remained unrefuted up to the present Conference. Within these recent weeks, Japan, by accepting the 5-5-3 ratio, has given evidence which only the weak-minded will in future dispute; and at the same time this ratio is also assurance that you have no intention of assaulting us. We have never aspired or intended to challenge the security of America or her far-ranging possessions; we have sought only security for ourselves. Never have we desired war, —certainly never a conflict with the nation that is the greatest purchaser of our goods and at the same time the most powerful factor on the Pacific. . . . The naval agreement to limit the construction of offensive or capital ships, although it does not totally destroy the physical equipment for war at sea, does effectively remove from the relations of the great naval Powers the distrust attendant on naval competition. This means not only economic relief from a heavy burden of taxation, but an even more important spiritual relief. The nations are at once freed to security, to calm, to friendliness and the pursuit of happiness in fair competition. This revival of decency in the world is strengthened by the adoption of laws governing the use of submarines, the decision of the nations not to develop their Pacific bases, and the evident determination generally to restrict arms and the threat of arms.

Prince Tokugawa, speaking at a private dinner in New York on December 20, said:

We followed the Western nations, I think I may say, conspicuously, when war was the game. We did not like it, but we had to do it. Our national existence depended upon our taking up arms; and to a very important extent the national existence of our great neighbor, China, also depended on our military and naval preparation.

Now a new era has come. There can be no doubt of that. It is an era which we Japanese welcome as sincerely as any other people in the world. You in America are remote, powerful, wealthy and secure. No other nation in the world would dare attack you except in desperation, and no combination is possible against you. To you, therefore, the coming era of peace is welcomed more in sentiment than in the grim, material way in which we in Japan must regard it.

In conclusion I would say that it seems to me the part of the American people to maintain a broad common-sense view of world affairs; to permit ourselves to be made the subjects of no needless fear, the instruments of no visionary projects of reformation upon remote continents; to make ourselves an example in fair dealing and to use our influence—which is great—in a way that will make us always loved and respected rather than feared or distrusted.